Volunteer Center Capacity Building Fund

Frequently Asked Questions:

This document includes questions asked during Serve Indiana's Clarification Period. Based on these questions, minor changes were made to the RFP and those are noted in the answers to questions. This document also contains the original FAQ section included in the Request for Proposals.

CLARIFICATION PERIOD QUESTIONS:

Are there word limits to the narrative section or page limits?

No, there are no word limits to application sections but there is a page limit to the narratives. There is a total application page limit of 7 pages for the narrative section. This page limit does not include the budget or the performance measures. In writing the program narrative, please refer to the specifics detailed throughout this RFP.

Can an organization request less than $20,000?

Yes, an organization can request less than the $20,000 listed in the RFP. There is no minimum request amount for this grant.

Is there a budget and application templates available for this grant?

Yes, we have uploaded both a template for the narratives and the budget. However, we encourage grantees to closely review the RFP to ensure they are aware of all submission instructions and application details.

What changes have been made to the original RFP since its release on March 4th?

We have updated our FAQ section to include the correct grant agreement date. We have also updated our application instructions to include a page limit. The RFP version located on our website now is the final version.

Do we need to have projected targets for our performance measures or can we simply estimate?

We expect grantees will have projected targets for their performance measures and that they will be as specific as possible. Please see the below FAQ about performance measures for more information.

RFP FAQs:

GENERAL QUESTIONS

What is the grant timeframe?
The grant will reflect a grant period from 05/02/2016-12/31/2016. The current application will reflect activities and a budget from 05/02/2016-12/31/2016.

How does the application process work?
1. Staff will review all applications to ensure that application guidelines are met and that appropriate attachments and supporting documents are included. Staff and grant review committee members will review all grants meeting the minimum requirements and evaluate the program design, organizational capacity, cost effectiveness/budget adequacy and any other elements as required in the application instructions.
2. Submitted applications will then be considered by a panel of objective reviewers. The panel will consider the grant review committee scores and comments, written grant application, organizational capacity, supporting documentation and current program performance and financial management. The panel will also make a determination about whether an application meets an identified state or national priority.
3. Decisions on funding may be negotiated with applicants by Serve Indiana staff based on decisions. Following negotiations, applicants will be required to make the agreed-upon changes in their applications.

What are the goals and background of the VCCBF grant?
This grant is modeled after the Volunteer Generation Fund, which is a grant program funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service. The Volunteer Generation Fund was established by the 2009 Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act. The VGF is designed to strengthen the nation's volunteer infrastructure.
The goals of Volunteer Generation Fund as described in the legislation are:
- To assist nonprofit, faith based, and other civic organizations by expanding and improving the capacity of such organizations to utilize such volunteers;
- Spur innovation in volunteer recruitment and management practices, with the goal of increasing the number of volunteers;
- Enable the people of the U.S. to effect change by participating in active volunteer and citizen service.

Are there other specific goals for VCCBF grants in Indiana?
The intention of Serve Indiana is that Volunteer Center Capacity Building grants will serve to inform the process of volunteer infrastructure development in Indiana, leading to discovery of innovative program models, development of statewide partnership opportunities, heightened awareness of volunteerism and service, and strengthening the volunteer infrastructure for the long-term, allowing organizations to capitalize on the assets in their communities, while addressing the challenges identified by the community.

Who are eligible applicants for VCCBF grants in Indiana?
VCCBF Grants are available for funding of those meeting key Volunteer Center functions in their service area.

For the purposes of this grant, what is a Volunteer Center?
A Volunteer Center is an organization whose mission is designed to support public and nonprofit organizations (by increasing volunteer management capacity) and volunteers (by connecting them with meaningful opportunities) within an identified service area. Volunteer Centers must connect volunteers and make their services available to community organizations outside of their own and promote volunteerism among citizens.

I'm a new applicant, and am concerned about completing a grant for federal funds in the timeframe given. What are the expectations for me?
Though the grant is awarding federal funds, the applications are being reviewed at the state level. While we are looking for quality applications, the process is not as arduous and competitive as many federal grants.

BUDGET

Can the value of the volunteer hours generated under this grant be counted as match?
No, because the primary purpose of this grant is to generate volunteers, the value of their volunteer hours is not considered an acceptable source of match. However, in cases where professionals are providing their services on a pro bono basis, such as an accountant who does your organizational books or an attorney who provides legal advice, the hours and value of these services may be allowable, as detailed in the federal cost principles. If you have questions about specific services or activities, please contact Serve Indiana.

WHAT ARE THE BUDGET CATEGORIES FOR THE 2016 VCCBF grant?
The following budget categories and descriptions apply to the VCCBF grant.
BUDGET CATEGORIES

Personnel Expenses. Include the portion of principal staff time attributed directly to the operation of the community collaborative project. List each staff position. Personnel costs will be paid based on actual time spent on the grant, not budgeted amounts. All staff listed in the grant budget on the federal or match side will be required maintain a timesheet documenting time spent on their grant as a portion of their total time and to meet National Service Criminal History Check Requirements as outlined here: http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/criminal-history-check

Personnel Fringe Benefits. Include costs of benefit(s) for staff listed in Personnel Expenses section. You can identify and calculate each benefit or show cost as a percentage of all salaries. You must include FICA, Worker's Compensation, and Unemployment Insurance for all applicable staff.

Travel. Describe the purposes for staff travel. Costs allowable are transportation, lodging, subsistence, and other related expenses for local and outside the project area travel. Calculations must be included. Limits on cost of each expense should mirror limits already established by your organization. Federal share of out-of-state conferences expenses are limited to attendance of one staff member per event (grantees may pay for additional relevant staff to attend from local funds and use that as match to the grant). Example: Staff travel to Volunteer Engagement Roundtable meetings – 1 staff x $.50 per mile x 500 miles = $250.00

Supplies. Include the funds for the purchase of consumable supplies and materials. You must individually list any single item costing $1,000 or more. Example: office supplies: (pens, paper, binders, folders, flash drives) x 2 staff x $200.00 per year = $400.

Contractual & Consultant Services. You may include costs for consultants related to the project's operations. Payments to individuals for consultant services under this grant may not exceed $400 per day (exclusive of any indirect expenses, travel, supplies, etc.). Where applicable, indicate the daily rate for consultants. Example: $400 x 1 consultant x 3 days professional development for consortium members = $1,200.

Training. Include the costs associated with training of staff working directly on the project; especially training that specifically enhances staff project implementation and professional skills. Example: staff training: registration fees $250, lodging $69 x 1 night, $28 for food costs x 2 days = $377.

Other Program Operating Costs. Allowable costs in this category may include volunteer background checks, and office space rental (for sites where projects are operating, utilities, and telephone and Internet expenses that are specifically used for Volunteer Center). If shared with other projects or activities, you must allocate the costs proportionately across programs. List each item and provide a justification in the budget narrative. Please include cost for staff background checks as applicable per the National Service Criminal History Check Requirements outlined here: http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/criminal-history-check

Administrative. *Definitions:* Administrative costs are indirect or centralized expenses of the overall administration of an organization that receives federal funds and do not include particular project costs. These costs may include administrative staff positions. For organizations that have an established indirect cost rate for federal awards, administrative costs mean those costs that are included in the organization's indirect cost rate agreement. Such costs are generally identified with the organization's overall operation and are further described in Office of Management and Budget Circulars. The federal share of administrative costs is limited by statute to 5% of the total federal funds **actually expended** under this grant.

How do I calculate the federal share of administrative costs?
Take the total federal share and multiply it by 0.05. This calculation will provide you with the maximum amount of administrative funds you can request under federal share. You are not required to include any funds under the administrative line item. Because of the way that the budget works, VCCBF grantees are not eligible to count any administrative costs as match to the grant (under state or local share) in this section. Please note that the federal share of administrative costs is limited to 5% of the federal funds actually expended under this grant.

SERVE INDIANA SUPPORT

What other activities will Serve Indiana provide to support the VCCBF?
Training and Technical Assistance: Serve Indiana will hold training and technical assistance sessions designed to increase the capacity of the grantees and to bring consistency to services and programming provided by the grantees. In addition, Serve Indiana will share other relevant training opportunities with grantees. All grant programs are expected to participate in Serve Indiana required trainings and budget to support their attendance.

How does Serve Indiana view its role in this grant?
Serve Indiana sees itself as a partner with Volunteer Centers and nonprofit organizations in Indiana. Of course, we also have a fiscal responsibility to ensure that the grant funds awarded are appropriately managed. We take our responsibilities for stewardship of federal funds seriously and will provide regular monitoring and oversight for programs funded under this grant. Programs that fail to meet grant requirements, including timeliness of reporting may have their funding rescinded or may be declined future funding.

What is Serve Indiana hoping to accomplish with this grant?
We believe that Volunteer Centers have an important role to play in professionalizing the role of volunteer manager and strengthening volunteer management at nonprofit organizations, and we intend to partner with them in this endeavor. Throughout the process, we will look to solicit input from stakeholders and grantees to improve the process and provide appropriate technical assistance and training supports. We feel that the state will benefit from an effective volunteer infrastructure and desire to learn and promote the outstanding volunteer managers, volunteer engagement activities, and volunteer recruitment, training and retention practices carried out by Indiana's nonprofit sector.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

I NOTICED THAT THE PERFORMANCE MEASURES ARE IN THE CAPACITY BUILDING MEASURE FOR CNCS – WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION ON THE DEFINITIONS AND OTHER REFERENCES RELATED TO CAPACITY BUILDING?
Below are the 2016 CNCS Performance Measures Instructions. While the document language specifies AmeriCorps programming, the information is applicable to Volunteer Center Capacity Building grants as well.
http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Performance_Measure_Instructions_2016.pdf

IS IT OKAY TO USE ESTIMATES FOR THE DEMOGRAPHIC INDICATORS?
No, the number of leveraged volunteers must be reported using accurate numbers. For the purposes of VCCBF, we track several types of leveraged volunteers separately (recruited and managed) and all of the data on leveraged volunteers must be accurately counted, tracked and reported. Please note that individuals funded by other CNCS programs cannot be counted by VCCBF grantees if they are providing this service as part of their CNCS grant activities. (For example, if you are reporting your boomer volunteers under a CNCS RSVP grant, you cannot also count those volunteers for VCCBF grant purposes.) We recommend using your best judgment in determining to which grant the volunteers should be attributed. Grantees should ensure that their data collection systems and processes allow for consistent and accurate tracking and reporting of volunteers.

In addition, if the VCCBF program is managing a program directly related to any of the demographic measures, it is expected that they report accurately on that indicator. For example, if a grantee is managing a service learning program for disadvantaged children or youth, it would be expected that that grantee report accurately on the children of incarcerated prisoners demographic. If the program is not directly related to any of the demographic measures, these numbers to not need to be reported.

WHAT IS THE COMMISSION'S DEFINITION OF SKILLED VOLUNTEERS?

For the purposes of this RFA, Serve Indiana is using the definition from the Corporation for National and Community Service and Hands On Network's, *Skills-Based Volunteerism: A New Generation of Service.* Skills-based volunteering (SBV) is an innovative approach that is rapidly gaining recognition as a powerful driver of both social impact and business value. Skills-based volunteerism utilizes the skills, experience, talents and education of volunteers and matches them with the needs of nonprofits. By leveraging all types of knowledge and expertise, SBV helps build and sustain nonprofits' capacity to achieve their missions successfully. Individual skilled volunteers may offer their particular expertise to a nonprofit agency, while corporate SBV involves employee volunteers working on projects for a nonprofit organization through a structured program developed and managed by their employer.
SBV is a strategic type of volunteerism that exponentially expands the impact of nonprofits by incorporating a whole range of skills that strengthen the operations and services of nonprofit organizations.

TIMELINE

I AM NOT SURE ABOUT THE TIMELINE FOR THESE ACTIVITIES. WE WON'T BE IDENTIFYING A STAFF PERSON UNTIL WE KNOW THAT WE'VE RECEIVED THE GRANT. HOW SHOULD WE GO ABOUT COMPLETING THE TIMELINE?
All applicants are expected to complete a timeline as best they are able. There will be opportunities for the applicant to propose changes to the timeline after the grant is awarded, and throughout the grant year. We see the timeline as a valuable tool, especially for new grantees, to remain on track for meeting grant requirements.